Teachers using annotations to engage students in assessment conversations: Recontextualising knowledge

Jill Willis (corresponding author)
Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

Lenore Adie
Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

Jill Willis is a lecturer in Education supporting undergraduate and postgraduate pre-service teachers in developing skills in leadership, digital pedagogy and assessment. Her research interests include classroom assessment and learning spaces that enhance learner autonomy and engagement.

Lenore Adie is a lecturer in Education with prior experience as a primary school teacher and administrator in state and private schools within Queensland. Her research interests include enacted assessment practices, and teachers' work and her doctoral study investigated assessment and online moderation processes, focusing on the formation of teacher identity.

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Abstract:

Assessment for Learning practices with students such as feedback, and self and peer assessment are opportunities for teachers and students to develop a shared understanding of how to create quality learning performances. Quality is often represented through achievement standards. This paper explores how primary school teachers used the process of annotating work samples to develop shared understanding of achievement standards during their curriculum planning phase, and how this understanding informed their teaching so that their students also developed this understanding. Bernstein's (2000) concepts of the pedagogic device are used to identify the ways teachers recontextualised their assessment knowledge into their pedagogic practices. Two researchers worked alongside seven primary school teachers in two schools over a year, gathering qualitative data through focus groups and interviews. Three general recontextualising approaches were identified in the case studies; recontextualising standards by reinterpreting the role of rubrics, recontextualising by replicating the annotation process with the students and recontextualising by reinterpreting practices with students. While each approach had strengths and limitations, all of the teachers concluded that annotating conversations in the planning phase enhanced their understanding, and informed their practices in helping students to understand expectations for quality.

Keywords: assessment standards; annotation; recontextualising; assessment for learning

Introduction

This paper analyses how teachers used annotations of student work to negotiate a shared understanding of achievement standards in their daily practice. Assessment for Learning (AfL) (Assessment Reform Group, 2002) has been an important professional learning focus for teachers that has connected curriculum and assessment. AfL strategies enable students to come to know the meaning of achievement standards and the skills and knowledge that they need to progress their learning. Including students in learning conversations about assessment judgements supports them to become 'experts' in their own learning (Black & Wiliam, 2010). For teachers to share this knowledge with their students, the teaching team first need to develop a collaborative interpretation of the standard (Sutton, 2014). In this article, the practice of annotating work samples as a part of professional planning conversations is explored as a way to develop a shared understanding of achievement standards amongst teachers. It is anticipated that this shared understanding will inform pedagogic practice so that students are meaningfully included in these learning conversations. Bernstein's (2000) concepts of the pedagogic device are used to identify the ways teachers recontextualised their assessment knowledge into their pedagogic practices.

Authors such as Black and Wiliam (1988) and Hattie (2009) have suggested effective strategies to involve students in their learning process. These include clarifying learning intentions and success criteria, and engineering effective classroom discussions, peer dialogue, feedback that progresses learning, self-assessment, and goal setting. All of these strategies depend on teachers having a shared understanding of the standards so that they can effectively guide their students towards their learning goals. Without this foundational knowledge there is a danger of reducing the AfL strategies to mechanistic checklists (Elwood, 2006) that lack consideration of the social and cultural contexts of diverse classrooms and schools. Such checklists of strategies can omit the rich dialogue of negotiation and the establishment of shared meaning that is a part of inclusive, ethical assessment practice (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

This process of coming to know together involves dialogue, sharing, feedback and opportunities to practice. Including students in learning and assessment conversations is an acknowledgement of students' rights to inclusive assessment practices in which students are a part of assessment conversations (Elwood & Lundy, 2010). Assessment literacy for students occurs when the teacher and the students are engaged in a dialogue that involves "articulating and negotiating classroom and cultural knowledges... in the initiation, development and practice of assessment to achieve the learning goals of students" (Willis, Adie & Klenowski, 2013, p. 242). Teaching, as an ethical practice, needs to develop students' assessment literacy by including them in an ongoing dialogue about their learning and assessment.

In this paper, annotated work samples are explored as one way in which teachers may develop a shared understanding of the standards within their social and cultural context that can then assist teachers to successfully articulate this knowledge with their students. The process of articulation is understood as a dialogue between teacher and students rather than a transmission of knowledge. While teachers commence teaching with a clear understanding of the qualities that they are valuing in a standard, their students will enter this conversation at various points of understanding. Articulation of a standard then becomes an ongoing dialogue or a negotiation of practice in which students come to understand themselves as learners and can make decisions about the next steps they need to achieve in their learning of a particular knowledge or skill. Using annotations that have been either developed by the teachers or developed with the students is explored as one strategy that can assist teachers and students to collaboratively develop an understanding of the qualities in student work that are evidence of an achievement standard.

Creating a shared understanding of assessment standards with students

Helping students make meaning from assessment standards is not a new dilemma for educators. Sadler wrote in 1998 about the importance of "letting students into the secret" of understanding the expectations inherent within assessment standards. Assessment standards are inherently fuzzy and have been designed from characteristics that are abstracted and anticipated and then codified using linguistic terms. Their "fuzziness is traceable to the fact that interpretations of the standards specifications are not universal but depend on the assessment context" (Sadler, 1987,

p. 202). Sadler identified that while there are four basic methods for specifying standards that include "using numerical cut-offs, the shared tacit knowledge of teachers, exemplars and verbal descriptions" (p. 207), assessment standards cannot be defined into existence. Assessment standards for teachers and students can only be understood by "usage-in-context" (p. 206) as the meaning and understanding "depends on the assessor's expectations and knowledge of the context" (p. 204). He concluded that teachers need to combine verbal descriptions of assessment standards with exemplars that are accompanied by "explicit annotations of the properties of individual pieces" to support their tacit knowledge making (p. 207). Even though Sadler wrote about these ideas in the 1980s, annotating of exemplars by teachers has not become a common teacher practice. Instead, sharing of assessment knowledge with students has occurred through strategies such as shared learning intentions, success criteria and quality feedback. More recently Sadler (2013) restated that there is a need to move beyond telling students what to do through feedback, and instead enable students to develop assessment expertise so they know what is worth noticing and know what to do.

The role of the teacher in developing student assessment literacies therefore is "not to coach students through the production of particular complex responses...it is to teach students how to judge quality and modify their own work during production" (Sadler, 2013. p. 55). Wiliam (2011, p. 12) refers to this as "activating learners as the owners of their own learning". This shift in purpose can challenge teachers' deeply held beliefs about the connection between learning and assessment. Teachers need opportunities to engage with these ideas at a practical level (Earl & Timperley, 2014). This can involve teachers scaffolding teaching conversations about quality and judgement making so that the students have opportunities to learn how to notice and responsively adjust their own work to enhance quality (Davies, 2011). While some teachers may engage in ongoing conversations where they think aloud about their judgment process with students, written annotations on assessment examples preserve some of those judgements in action. The process of annotation with teacher peers and then also with students, as well as the annotated products themselves provide resources that can be drawn on in developing shared assessment knowledge.

Annotation as an assessment practice

Annotations are understood as "the augmentation of text with additional content...designed to actively engage with the host text...and employed by author or reader" (Ball, 2010, p. 138). Previous research in the use of annotations has focussed on teachers annotating students' work for feedback purposes (e.g., Ball, 2010; Crisp & Johnson, 2007; Heinrich, 2004; McGuire, 2005), and on the value of students annotating their own work (Johansen, 1998) or annotating text to support comprehension (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004; Zywica & Gomez, 2008). Using annotations to facilitate student understanding of achievement standards has received less attention in the literature. One study by Johansen (1998) explored how University Law students' understanding of assessment standards could be improved through students annotating their own writing to explain their thinking behind a response. This strategy was found to improve the quality of responses and to support learning (Johansen, 1998). Other researchers (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004; Zywica & Gomez, 2008) have explored how teaching students to annotate can support students to learn reading and

comprehension skills. Annotations are an established strategy for promoting dialogue about assessment.

Most research has considered the use of annotations as feedback to students in the process of the learning phase. This paper reports on different ways that teachers initiated the practice of annotating assessment examples during the planning phase, prior to the commencement of the learning phase. A written annotation preserves some of the teacher's thinking about quality performance against examples of student work. To move beyond a simplistic 'what works' approach, theoretical concepts from Bernstein (2004), including the concept of the pedagogic device and in particular the processes of recontextualising, are used in this analysis of teacher practices.

Bernstein's pedagogic device

Bernstein's (2004) concept of the pedagogic device enables the identification of the "ensemble of rules of procedures via which knowledge (intellectual, practical, expressive, official or local knowledge) is converted into pedagogic communication" (Singh, 2002, p. 573). The theoretical concepts provide a language to analyse the process of knowledge production and reproduction by different agents who shape classroom assessment practices, such as federal and state education systems, policy writers, local school authorities, textbook writers, teacher educators, teachers, parents and students. There are three interrelated yet hierarchical theoretical principles within the pedagogic device, those of distributive principles, followed by recontextualising principles and then evaluative principles that coordinate the specific pedagogic practices in classrooms. In particular, this paper draws on the theoretical concepts of recontextualizing principles (Bernstein 2004) within the context of vertical and horizontal discourses (Bernstein 1999).

When significant changes to national assessment occurs, the specialist knowledge or vertical assessment discourses need to be translated into accessible forms or "pedagogised to constitute school knowledge" within a horizontal or mundane local context (Singh, 2002, p. 571). This involves knowledge agents recontextualising the knowledge, that is each person "selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses, and relates other discourses to constitute its own order and orderings" (Bernstein, 2004. p. 159). Recontextualisation changes how the meaning of the knowledge is represented by the agent, such as a teacher, to others such as students, as the recontexutalising agent decides what is more or less important, and how to relate the new knowledge, in this case assessment standards, within daily practice. Recontextualising therefore involves a process of "dis-embedding of knowledge/discourse from its site of origin and re-embedding it in the pedagogic context... offering an opportunity for change or additional interpretation, producing a heuristic version of the original discourse, never the same thing" (Doherty, Dooley & Woods, 2013 p. 522). Recontextualisation therefore impacts on power relationships, and who will have access to what version of the new knowledge, and importantly how students have access to which versions of whose knowledge about assessment standards.

For the teachers featured in this project, recontextualising the vertical discourse of the newly published Achievement Standards in the Australian Curriculum was a lengthy process that involved several stages. Teachers first had to learn how to access and interpret the achievement standards from the site of origin. The Achievement Standards are published as part of a digital curriculum that is openly accessed and regularly updated. Teachers, parents and students can all directly engage with the statements that describe the expected performance for the end of each year of schooling (ACARA, 2014). There was an initial process of recontextualising as teachers reinterpreted the meaning through comprehending the text, as these standards provided a new vertical discourse for teachers (Adie & Willis, 2014). Recontextualizing also occurred at the level of the mid-level bureaucracies as curriculum advisors acted as policy translators "who plan and produce the events and processes and institutional texts of policy in relation for others who are thus inducted into the discursive patterns of policy" (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011, p. 630). The third layer of recontextualisation occurred as the teachers translated the implications of these standards into the horizontal or everyday local assessment discourses of their school as teaching teams met together to develop annotated exemplars (Willis & Adie, 2013, Adie & Willis, 2014). Recontextualising the vertical discourse into horizontal practice occurred in a fourth stage as individual teachers took away the shared understandings they developed as a team into their own classroom planning and assessment practices. The teachers each developed different approaches to sharing the knowledge they had gained about the achievement standards with their students. Bernstein (2004, p. 182) notes that the space between vertical and horizontal assessment discourses is a "meeting point of order and disorder, of coherence and incoherence; it is the crucial site of the 'yet to be thought'." This article focuses particularly on understanding the sociocultural practices that teachers drew on to negotiate meaning as they engaged in the third stage of recontextualisation through the coordinating activity of annotating student samples of work (case 1) and the fourth stage of sharing this knowledge with their students (case 2 and 3).

Negotiating the intersections between the vertical and horizontal discourses in team meetings where teachers collaboratively annotated samples of assessment was challenging work for teachers. It involved prioritising time for intensive discussions with colleagues, and depended on trust between colleagues as individual assessment practices were deprivatised. It involved preparedness to work through periods of 'incoherence and disorder' as the teachers had to search for language to articulate knowledge that had previously been tacit, and negotiating the implications within school assessment cultures (Willis & Adie, 2013). It also involved epistemic tensions such as re-examining beliefs about the role of assessment in learning, and assumptions about who makes judgements about assessment (Adie & Willis, 2014). This paper builds on previous analyses to understand how teachers began to recontextualise their shared understanding into their daily classroom assessment practices.

Research design

It has been suggested that an understanding of practice develops through an exploration of

processes of implementation, and the understanding of those charged with the implementation, rather than focussing on the outcomes of the implementation (Black, Harrison, Hodgen, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2005). In this project, the two researchers worked alongside seven primary school teachers in two schools to collaboratively investigate effective annotation practices using the Australian Curriculum achievement standard. Each school was visited several times. The purpose of the research was to understand the processes that the teachers needed to work through to understand standards-based assessment and to then put these understandings into practice in their classrooms. Teachers' questioning and collaborative problem solving provided insight into how the practice of annotating student work was informing their teaching practice.

In the first visit, the school principal outlined to the researchers how the school approached planning and assessment and identified the key school initiatives. At the next visit, the researchers worked alongside the teachers for an initial planning day discussing how planning occurred at the school and in the year level, and the positioning of assessment within these discussions. Data were collected through the observation and audio recording of teachers' conversations as they analysed their own pedagogic practices, discussed the value of the annotation practice within their practice, and then trialled annotating teacher-made exemplars or samples of student work. The teachers' justification of why the identified section of the student's work was evidence of a particular standard was a focus of the observation. These meetings occurred at the beginning of a teaching semester. The teachers then implemented this unit of work and trialled different ways to incorporate the annotated work samples to inform their teaching, and student learning. Follow up email conversations and audio recordings of reflective conversations several months later were analysed as a record of the challenges faced, and possible solutions. These data were interpreted into descriptive case study narratives (Simons, 2009), before ongoing collaborative analysis against theoretical frameworks enabled relationships to emerge (Eisenhardt, 2002).

At the conclusion of this project, the teachers were invited to record a video where they discussed the issues and challenges that they faced in the process of annotating student work samples, and how they addressed these issues, as well as how the teachers used the annotated work samples to help their students understand the different features of their work that will evidence a standard of achievement. Subsequent visits were concerned with discussing how the learning from the first trial semester would inform the planning for following semesters.

Evidence from practice

The following narrative case studies are part of an in-depth micro analysis based around critical events. They represent the teachers' practices as they reinterpreted their teaching team conversations from the beginning of the semester into their daily teaching practice.

Case one: Recontextualising the role of assessment artefacts in the planning process

This case illustrates how a team of four teachers moved from viewing annotations as a tool to clarify the link between the criteria sheet and their judgement-making, to using annotations to

justify a grade to parents and students, to finally viewing the annotations as an opportunity to enable their students to understand the standards. The four Year 6 teachers had an established practice of meeting regularly to design common learning plans and assessment together, a process which they believed established a shared understanding of the standards. The assessment standards also informed the design of their learning activities; "we start by planning what we want the kids to work towards." The expectations for learning were contained within a rubric that identified the assessment criteria and standard descriptors. However, during the marking of student work, the teachers had realised that some criteria were not clearly aligned with the task. Annotating student work was valued as a way of stabilising the connections between the assessment criteria and the evidence in the student work: "What different parts of the criteria are actually referring to and how to keep it so that we understand it, the kids understand it and the parents understand it." Assessment standards were perceived by the teachers as stable and the rubric could be designed as "foolproof". While the teachers knew "what we want to do", they found it "really challenging to get to the point where the rubrics are user friendly and… get it as a functioning and working document". As the teachers initially viewed the standards as unproblematic, annotating student work was also regarded as a straightforward process.

In thinking through the possibility of using samples of student work to help develop a shared understanding of standards, the teachers first had to visualise how it might be possible to fit this activity into their already busy everyday work lives. One issue that the teachers identified was that many of their students and parents are "driven by their mark". The teachers felt pressured by some parents who indicated that "my child is an A student so let me know if she is slipping", and by students who were rewarded by parents for achieving an "A" with horse riding lessons. The teachers wanted to challenge this result-focussed use of assessment, and shift the conversation to one about learning from assessment. Annotated examples were seen as a way of highlighting qualities that could inform moderation, and also support teachers in these difficult conversations with parents. One teacher reflected that "if we had a "B" example on file, the annotations also have to point out why it is not an "A" or why it was better than a "C" using what we had framed in the rubric." Annotations were initially valued as a justification of a standard to external audiences.

Using student samples of work, the teachers began to think aloud what annotations might look like and the additional purposes they would serve. It became important to know under what conditions that the task was completed, for example the expectations about editing were different under exam conditions or in an extended drafting timeframe. Time effective strategies for annotating student work, like using arrows, number coding, track changes or colour coding in the texts were discussed. These discussions led back to questions about purpose: "We wouldn't do it for every child in the class? Would we?"

The type of annotation therefore was seen to depend on the purpose and audience for the annotated example. Three examples of differing purposes and approaches were identified in the discussion:

- If it is to justify to parents, then maybe every child's work would be annotated.
- If it is to provide models for students, only one or two examples are needed.
- If is it to create a portfolio to guide moderation then one or two examples of each standard would be annotated.

There was confusion for the teachers about the difference between annotations and feedback to students. So while important connections between existing practices and texts were made, such as "annotations are like the descriptors in the rubric, and kids need to see where they have done that in their work", the similarity of annotation to the practice of giving feedback also led to some initial confusion. In thinking through these questions, the teachers decided: "I don't think it matters who it is for, if we look at our rubric, and what they have done, and identify the evidence." and "Yes, it shouldn't matter if you are showing a student, a parent or a new colleague. It should pull apart exactly what evidence is in there, and what areas there are for growth". The teachers' search for purpose led them to consider how annotations could be an effective practice to recognise evidence of the assessment standards for multiple audiences.

In attempting to annotate scripts, the teachers first identified what they meant by their rubric statement for an "A" – "maturity and flair". In this conversation, the teachers moved between evidence in the students' work as well as what was missing in the responses. As the teachers unpacked expectations like audience awareness, they wondered, "Am I seeing through adult eyes instead of a 10 year old's eyes? She is coming from her experience." They drew on their knowledge of how texts were produced and their understanding of 'typical' performance for this age group. To annotate one student sample took an hour of conversation, where teachers were trying to articulate some of the assumptions that informed their judgement making.

By the end of the discussion, the teachers indicated that they could see how annotating conversations in the planning phase could enhance their own practice and understanding, as well as help their students to understand the expectations for quality. One teacher reflected, "We are often naive about how explicit we need to be…we walk away assuming we are all going to do the same thing." Another teacher agreed commenting, "I was thinking before when we were writing down our thoughts, what a waste of time, as if we don't all do this [make judgements in similar ways]. And then I realised actually we are all doing very different things [laughing]". Others in the teaching team reflected that differences in interpretation of standards was a natural product of having big teaching teams, and also reflected the very different ways they each processed information. There was agreement that there was room for flexibility, but also that talking through and taking the time to record their thinking would enable them to maintain these shared understandings throughout the semester.

In their classrooms, the teachers took this shared understanding from the planning process and recontextualised it into their teaching. They shared the annotated work samples with their students and were pleased with the resulting development they saw in student assessment work:

We have been showing the students samples from last year and have noticed that this has

improved the quality of the work they complete as they can see that either they could do better, or that they can see where to aim for (email communication, 19th July, 2013).

The investment of time in the annotation conversations in the planning phase had learning benefits for the teachers and the students.

Case two: Recontextualising by replicating

This case illustrates how one teacher replicated the process of using codes and symbols with her students to highlight the valued qualities within an exemplar. During the initial planning day with the researchers, Cathy particularly liked the annotations that used codes and symbols to highlight the valued qualities. She wanted to share her expectations for quality with her Year Two students, and chose to explore the use of codes and symbols to annotate an example of an A standard of work in preparation for their next assessment piece.

Cathy provided each student with a copy of the assessment task and rubric and also an example of what an A standard answer might look like. She started by reading through the rubric with her students to help them understand the criteria and expected standard of work. Next, using codes such as a single bracket around simple sentences, a double bracket around a compound sentence, and different colours to underline pronouns and noun groups, the teacher and students collaboratively annotated the A example. Cathy asked for student ideas and collected them on the whiteboard at the front of the room. Students used coloured pencils to create their own copies, and added new ideas for annotating valued qualities from the class discussions. These class discussions enabled the students to have greater understanding of the standards through the annotating process.

Cathy explained to the students that this activity would help them to understand what was being asked of them in an assessment task. In the week following this activity, students were asked to complete a draft of a writing task, and Cathy gave feedback using the annotating codes they had learned together. Finally, she used the same codes when she marked the final draft of the piece of writing, so students "knew why they got the mark they did". The process of annotating during the planning phase in preparation for teaching, and then in the teaching phase prior to assessment, supported an understanding of the standards that was then extended during formative and summative feedback practices.

In reflecting on this new practice, Cathy laughed, saying, "It took me a long time [to annotate each students' final piece of work]. I went through all of the noun groups in one highlighter colour, then I went back and did all the pronouns... I would love to know a way of doing it quickly, but I just found it so valuable, I think it was worth the time... I am a visual learner, so I could clearly see the evidence when I used the rubrics... I could also see the repetition in pronouns and what they were familiar with... It stood out... It helped me immensely." She also reflected that the students had shown significant improvement in their results from their previous assessment where they had not used an example: "Most of them have done better on the task because they knew the expectations. They knew exactly what I was looking for. Everything that I had showed

them was what I marked them on. There was nothing else." While some of the students commented, "Our teacher is helping us to understand what is in a good sentence and how to get a good mark", others indicated that it was "a lot of writing". Replicating the whole process of annotating using coding that Cathy had valued in her planning day was valuable for some learners and demanding for others.

Cathy reflected that the practice of using annotations had raised some important questions for her own practice that she still needed to think through. She wondered if she had the time to annotate in this way for every assessment piece, and how this practice could be presented in a more engaging way for learners. She was also concerned about how to frame feedback for students who do not achieve the A standard as she was concerned about learner identity and self-efficacy when the students were so young. Cathy was searching for more time efficient ways to help her achieve the same benefit.

Case three: Recontextualising by reinterpreting practice.

The following case study illustrates how one experienced teacher reinterpreted her practice and changed the approach she had used for a number of years. Rebecca's planning involved teaching Year Two children to literally and inferentially gain meaning from fiction and non-fiction texts. She identified that the process of mapping backwards from the assessment task during the conversations with the researchers on the planning day had helped her to clarify the skills she needed to teach prior to the assessment task. Through the conversation about the expected standards, and recording this as annotations on the work samples, she had clarified her own expectations of what a high quality answer would look like. She wanted answers to be detailed, in well-structured sentences that would also use part of the question in the answer. She realised that students needed the opportunity to learn the difference between an inferential question and a literal question, and how to write high quality answers. She recognised that she had been teaching a long time, and strategic questioning was a skill she had yet to master and would continue to work on.

In response, Rebecca set up three practice tests as learning experiences. These were designed to be similar to the assessment piece students would have to complete, so students would become familiar with the genre. After finding information and fictional texts, she wrote literal and inferential questions for each, modelling the questions in the assessment task in the unit for which she was preparing students. She found the writing of precise and well worded questions to be more difficult than she expected. This challenge was something she struggled with, but also welcomed. She taught the students where to look for clues in the text for literal questions and then using a highlighter to show where they found it. She then taught the students how to search for answers to inferential questions. She reflected, "I was focussed, I knew exactly what I wanted students to be able to achieve". Identifying the teaching focus also helped her decide how to prioritise her teaching time, instead of "rushing from one thing to the next", she identified she had enabled her children "to have a better opportunity to learn". Rebecca felt that for the first time in her teaching career she had really unpacked and clarified the skills she was focusing on, and taught those skills.

The quality of the written work that students gave to her in response surprised her, as it was significantly beyond the quality she had expected; "I was blown away by the results...who would have believed this was the work of 7 and 8 year olds?". While Rebecca stated that she initially had felt guilty for not providing students with an annotated A example, in the end she was pleased as she felt that this would have restricted the quality of responses. She reflected, "Maybe if I had shown an A exemplar, maybe my standard would have been less because I didn't think they would be able to achieve this high standard". She noted that previously she had not given her students the "opportunity to shine". By beginning her planning with an annotating conversation to clarify her expectations of quality Rebecca declared, "I've developed as a teacher. I'm more aware of the importance of it [mapping backwards from assessment]". Since that experience, she is now teaching Year Six students, and is using the same principles to inform her teaching, and experiencing the same confidence that she is giving her students every opportunity to learn the skills they need.

Discussion

While the teachers in each school collaboratively annotated the students' work, each took different aspects of these discussions into their classroom practice. As identified earlier, teachers were recontextualising shared or new assessment understandings in several stages, and the translation of their new understandings from the annotation conversations with peers into their daily pedagogic work with students was recognised as a fourth stage. The three case studies demonstrate some of the quite different ways that teachers made meaning and began to translate new shared understandings into existing teaching repertoires. Three general approaches were identified in the cases, recontextualising understandings of standards identified in rubrics to sharing these with multiple audiences including their students (case one), recontextualising by replicating the annotation process with the students (case two) and recontextualising by reinterpreting previous practices (case three). In each of these approaches, the teachers were seeking to make connections between their previous understandings and ways of working and the newer assessment practice of annotating assessment samples. The following discussion draws on Bernstein's pedagogic device to analyse how teachers embedded their knowledge of standards through the annotation process into their teaching practice to support student learning.

Recontextualising standards within historic school practices

Within their existing assessment repertoires, both the achievement standard and the rubric or criteria sheets were familiar representations of quality for the teachers. Annotations were another way of exemplifying the assessment standard by trying to capture in words or symbols some of the discussions about valued qualities. Annotations represented an attempt to create products that would reflect and guide quality assessment practices in the daily ongoing work of teachers. Additionally the annotation process was valued as a way to support teachers and students coming to know the meaning of achievement standards. In the collaborative process of annotating, particularly in case one, the teachers wanted to represent their understandings within the school's existing assessment repertoire of criteria sheets and rubrics. In the process of translating the qualities that

the teacher group had valued in the annotations discussion into a rubric, teachers experienced some confusion and questioned how annotations written collaboratively during the planning process differed from written feedback. The process of reflection with one another and the researchers about the similarities and differences between existing practices such as providing written feedback and the new practices of using annotations in the planning process, provided the opportunity for teachers to appropriate and relocate the new discursive practice of annotation from a single practice into a constellation of practices, that is, into a greater "ordering" of meaning (Bernstein, 1990, p. 184). In the three cases, different orders of meaning were created. Recontextualising is therefore an active and creative process of meaning making, that both draws on existing skills while simultaneously enabling new repertoires.

It became clear that feedback and annotating during planning use similar teacher skills, requiring teachers to document in writing their judgement making. When annotations are used in planning and in feedback, teachers are involved in:

- Producing written comments on student work giving reasons for an assessment evaluation;
- Highlighting evidence of an expected standard, where it has or has not been achieved; and
- Using the language of the curriculum in the public representation of a standard, for example in the assessment rubric.

Annotations can be used in the planning process and annotations as a part of the feedback process. Yet these assessment practices of feedback and annotation for planning differed in their timing, audience, purposes and artefacts (Table 1).

Differences	**Annotation for Feedback**	**Annotation during planning for shared understanding**
Timing	Occurs after students have produced work, or in the production of student assessment work.	Occurs during the planning process prior to students producing work. Can also occur after the production of student work as part of moderation conversations that then informs the next planning process.
Audience	Students	Teachers, and possibly students and parents
Purpose	Individualised guidance: To guide future learning. To justify assessment results.	Consistency/shared understanding/planning: Representations of quality that are not individual, but can guide conversations that develop a shared understanding of the standards.
Artefact	Uses student's own work	Uses teacher made samples of work or previous student work samples

Table 1: *Comparing the teacher annotation practices during feedback and planning stages of the teaching and learning cycle.*

Annotating exemplars or student work samples during the planning phase enabled the teachers to develop some shared understandings of the achievement standards. While the focus of annotating during the planning conversation is on developing a shared understanding amongst the teaching team, the artefacts from this discussion may be used to share their knowledge with their students so that they too gain a clear understanding of the learning intention and success criteria. This recontextualisation into pedagogic practice is visible as teachers articulate and identify the expected quality of work to their students before and during production. This can occur either by teachers directly sharing their annotated samples (cases one and two) or by explicitly teaching these expectations to their students (case three).

The differences as outlined in Table 1 may provide support for teachers who are looking for bridges between familiar practices and annotating as a new practice positioned in the planning phase. Table 1 may also enable teachers to differentiate between the practices. For example in Case three, Cathy annotated every student piece of work, possibly conflating the feedback and annotation processes. Understanding the different purposes may help her to find an alternative, time-saving process. Making meaning through existing practices is a messy process where teachers needed to feel in control. Working through these issues enabled the teachers to understand the different ways each had of viewing and thinking about the standards to progress towards some form of consistency amongst the teaching team. This practice is synonymous with the concept of backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) which involves teachers considering the evidence of learning first and then planning the learning activities to support success. Both processes involve teachers thinking about evidence of learning to inform their teaching practice.

Annotating student work samples during the planning process was an opportunity for the teachers to ask questions about assessment that were often unexamined in their planning and assessment conversations. Within the school culture of case study one, and the classroom culture of case study two, the rubric or criteria sheet had the potential to become overly powerful in regulating the teachers' assessment practices, becoming a ruling substitute for a richer understanding of quality. This seemed to be occurring when teachers were focussed on their official knowledge (Bernstein, 2004) of rubrics, worrying about the rules of using the rubric- "Can I mark on the line?" "What if there is a quality that is not in the criteria sheet? Can I still value it?" By annotating the exemplars at the beginning of the curriculum planning process, the teachers had opportunities to discuss these troubling ideas. The dialogue around specific student example texts or exemplars developed by the teachers involved the teachers simultaneously engaging with the horizontal discourses of local production and context, as well as the more abstract and specialised vertical discourse of the subject discipline and the assessment discourses. Rather than a rules-based and restricted version of assessment knowing, the teachers were actively (re)constructing what was 'thinkable' as they recontextualised and pedagogised knowledge for themselves as teachers and for their students. According to Bernstein (2004), the process of recontextualising is not a neutral process, but a "site of struggle and appropriation" of the symbolic control of power, knowledge and

consciousness (p. 181). Recontextualising is an opportunity to question old ideas and previously 'unthinkable' concepts like valuing qualities not on a rubric, generate ideas and create new orders of meaning. The teachers' concerns about parents and school reporting systems and how to recontextualise the new assessment practice of annotating a work sample, is another example of the struggle within school contexts that inform meaning making about achievement standards. As Sadler noted (1987, p. 202) "interpretations of the standards specifications are not universal but depend on the assessment context". There was the potential for some of the teachers' historic contextual agreements to become disrupted in processes such as these annotation conversations as teachers began to question and reconstruct some of their previous taken-for-granted assumptions.

Recontextualising in practice

The assimilation of the annotating process into the existing planning process was gradual, with the teachers finding different points of entry and exit into the practice. For experienced teachers like Rebecca in case three, and some of the teachers in case one, it provided an opportunity to refine their assessment judgement making particularly when they experienced the annotation process as an efficient practice that saved them time and made their curriculum planning more strategic. For beginning teachers like Cathy in case two, it was an opportunity to develop new practices. While each of the teachers sought ways to share their insights with their students, in-depth interviews with Rebecca and Cathy enabled the researchers to understand how they each attempted to adjust their previous assessment discourses to involve students in developing a shared understanding of the assessment standard.

Cathy replicated the annotation process that she had valued, and walked her students through a process of interpreting the criteria sheet and being annotators. She was engaged in recontextualising the vertical discourse and the elements of the national achievement standard, and the system-wide assessment task by integrating the knowledge into her pedagogic practice. She drew from the peer discussions and emerging horizontal discourse with her teaching partner around making expectations explicit, to negotiate what success in the assessment task might look like in her classroom practice. This was a significant shift from her previous approach, where she had not shown students the assessment standards. Previously she had believed that 7 and 8 year old students were too young to understand assessment standards, and needed to be protected from the knowledge that their work was being graded against standards. The process of annotating an example task with the student was a significant change to her beliefs and practice as Cathy then shared the full 'teacher' knowledge about criteria and standards with her students. In reflecting on the process Cathy found that the majority of the students' results improved. She was also satisfied that students understood the annotating activities and purpose, however she acknowledged that the lessons and strategies she used to share this knowledge with her students was not as engaging as she would have liked. Also for some students the adult language of the criteria sheet had been a lot of text to read. Interviews held with children after the lesson indicated that students recognised the valued features of the text that the annotating activity had highlighted, particularly the simple and compound sentences, and use of pronouns. However in making the expectations for quality more

specific for students, broader understandings of quality, in terms of the overall purpose of writing, were overshadowed. Stobart (2008) describes the dilemma between specificity and clarity as akin to "walking a tightrope" explaining that (p. 154). Cathy was keen to continue sharing the assessment standards with students, but needed some further support to find the balance between specificity and clarity. She also wanted to recontextualise this new assessment practice within her other pedagogic priorities such as differentiation and active learning. The introduction of this new practice therefore also meant negotiating its meaning within multiple pedagogic practices.

For Rebecca, the recontextualising was challenging and professionally reinvigorating. The annotation conversations had helped her recognise a gap in her professional practice. The process of annotating helped her articulate some of the more tacit expectations she had about quality performance. She began to critically reflect on her practice, asking herself what opportunities she had previously given students to learn the skills she was going to assess. Rebecca, a more experienced teacher, began by specifically teaching the skills she had identified and then evaluated the students' understanding of these skills through a series of practice tests. Rebecca was preparing the students for a comprehension test, so she aimed to familiarise the students with these skills by replicating the assessment task in practice tests. Rebecca found the practice to be successful, as the quality of the work that the students produced significantly improved. However the recontextualising practice was a mainly reproductive pedagogic approach that did not significantly shift the power of who had access to what knowledge. The assessment literacy of students was developed through assessment activities, but connections to learning and greater ownership over their own learning were not made. Rebecca's approach was significantly shaped by her beliefs that treated assessment as a separate event from learning.

Creating opportunities for students to develop student assessment literacies was new practice for both of these teachers and remained teacher directed. To realise Sadler's 1998 vision that students would learn to understand quality performances through explicit and tacit ways of knowing, teachers needed further support to reflect on their developing practice as understood within the evaluative field of Bernstein's (2004) pedagogic device. Evaluative rules "constitute specific pedagogic practices. In general terms, evaluative rules are concerned with recognising what counts as valid realisations of instructional (curricular content) and regulative (social conduct, character and manner) texts" (Singh, 2002. p. 572). While the teachers chose to use these new understandings about annotations in certain ways based on school priorities and ways of working and their length of practice, opportunities to critically reflect on assessment practice and question assumptions of validity are part of a longer term cycle of inquiry. The new annotation practices did provide opportunity for these types of discussions. For example, Rebecca's observation that if she had previously produced an annotated exemplar, it would not have reflected a high enough expectation, raised the significant question of whether sharing annotations with students might restrict their potential performance. Introducing a new assessment practice such as annotating exemplars with colleagues and possibly with students involves both short and long term negotiations of meaning.

Conclusion

The act of collaboratively annotating student work during the planning process enabled the teachers to develop a shared understanding of the standards and the qualities they were valuing as evidence of student learning. As a result of this collaborative annotating process, the teachers then recontextualised this understanding into their pedagogic practice so they could enhance and support their students' learning. Using annotations to support teachers to develop an understanding of achievement standards can result in focussed teaching on the qualities that are being valued as evidence of learning that enable students to come to know quality work. Wiliam (2009, p. 37) states that "designing ways of supporting teachers to develop their practice of formative assessment at scale must be the main priority". The process of collaboratively annotating student work samples has shown in these instances to be one such supportive practice. All of the teachers reported greater clarity for themselves and their teaching team, and improved student results.

Assessment, when viewed as a social practice, is situated and understood within a specific cultural context. As the discussion shows, the practice is not one that can be dropped into current practice without significant support for teacher conversations that trouble previous assumptions and involve some longer-term experimentation and reflection. Wiliam (2012) advises that teaching practices will not change unless practices, based on research evidence, are designed; we need to encourage teachers "to adopt new practices that they then incorporate into their routine teaching", that is teachers need to "act their way into a new way of thinking" (p. 12). It was evident that quality assessment practice would involve more conversations and time before the practice of writing annotations becomes an enacted fluency.

Teachers need opportunity to engage in cyclical reflective learning conversations where assumptions and beliefs that drive choices in recontextualising can be examined. Annotating assessment examples can therefore not achieve significant shifts in teacher understanding as a stand-alone practice, but as a supported and ongoing process that enables success, and then continues to challenge long held beliefs.

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